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**STATE ADMINISTRATION AND VETERAN AFFAIRS INTERIM
COMMITTEE**
67th Montana Legislature

SENATE MEMBERS

Dee Brown
Janet Ellis
Douglas (Doug) Kary
Edith (Edie) McClafferty

HOUSE MEMBERS

Jacob Bachmeier
Jessica Karjala
Forrest Mandeville
Wendy McKamey
Ray Shaw
Marvin Weatherwax

COMMITTEE STAFF

K.V. Aldrich - Attorney
Bri Nordhagen - Secretary
Sheri Scurr - Research
Analyst

MINUTES LOG

June 18, 2020

Day two of June 17-18, 2020,
meeting
8:37 AM

Room 152, Capitol, Helena, MT
In-person and via Zoom

Please note: This document is a Minutes Log and provides annotation of the time elapsed between the beginning of the meeting and the time at which the item was presented or discussed, a motion was made, or a vote was taken. The narrative presented here is provided only as a guide to the audio or video recording of the meeting. The official discussion, motion, or vote is available on the audio or video archive of this meeting. The Legislature does not prepare a transcript of the meeting activities. The time designation may be used to locate the referenced discussion on the audio or video recording of this meeting.

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ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Rep. Wendy McKamey, Chair (R)
Sen. Janet Ellis, Vice Chair (D)
Rep. Jacob Bachmeier (D)
Sen. Dee Brown (R)
Rep. Jessica Karjala (D)
Sen. Douglas (Doug) Kary (R)
Rep. Forrest Mandeville (R)
Sen. Edith (Edie) McClafferty (D)

Rep. Ray Shaw (R)
Rep. Marvin Weatherwax (D)

Members Excused:

Members Absent:

Staff Present:

K.V. Aldrich, Attorney
Bri Nordhagen, Secretary
Sheri Scurr, Research Analyst

Rep. McKamey, Presiding Officer

08:08:38 Chairwoman McKamey called the State Administration and Veterans' Affairs Interim Committee to back to order from recess on June 17. Chair McKamey reviewed the agenda with the committee.

HJ 23 - Study of Montana Veteran Services Structure and Funding

08:10:29 Ms. Scurr began her review of the June 2019 Overview of the Board of Veterans' Affairs and the Montana Veterans' Affairs Division (MVAD). **(Exhibit 18)**

08:16:07 Ms. Scurr reviewed a handout showing the Montana Veterans' Affairs Division Organizational Chart and regional and county data on VA compensation paid to veterans by county in FY 19 provided by Kelly Ackerman, Administrator, MVAD. **(Exhibit 19)**

08:19:52 Ms. Scurr reviewed the "VA State Summary for Montana" handout. **(Exhibit 20)**

Questions and discussion from the committee

08:21:27 Rep. Mandeville asked if compensation and pensions were included in the \$233,000,000. Rep. Mandeville asked why there was over a \$100,000,000 difference from the year 2017 to 2019.

08:22:38 Sen. Ellis stated it said compensation and not pension and that could be the difference.

08:24:02 Rep. Mandeville stated that getting a chart from MVAD for fiscal year 2017 for comparison would also help.

08:24:26 Ms. Scurr began her review of the draft final report on the "HJ 23 - Veteran Service Officer Programs: Structure & Funding in Other States" handout. **(Exhibit 21)**

08:25:19 Ms. Scurr reviewed the "HB 0172" handout, **(Exhibit 22)** and the "PD 0005" handout. **(Exhibit 23)**

08:25:51 Ms. Scurr continued her overview of the "HJ 23 - Veteran Service Officer Programs" handout and a Summary Table of Six Selected States. **(Exhibit 24)**

Committee discussion and work session on rule review matters

08:29:11 Ms. Aldrich gave an update on the Secretary of State's (SOS's) response to the State Administration and Veterans' Affairs committee formal request to repeal the emergency rule discussed on June 17 by 10 a.m. today, June 18. Ms. Aldrich was in contact with the SOS and expected the SOS would adopt that repeal by 10 a.m.

08:29:43 Sen. Brown stated the committee didn't want to go that direction and appreciated the SOS was listening and had responded.
08:29:56 Chair McKamey stated the committee appreciated the efforts from the SOS's office.

BREAK

08:30:35

RECONVENE

08:41:09

HJ 23 - Study of Montana Veteran Services Structure and Funding

08:41:31 Ms. Scurr addressed the discrepancy between the amount of the VA expenditures in Montana compared to the numbers presented in the MVAD handout. ([Exhibit 25](#))

Questions from the committee

08:43:05 Rep. Mandeville asked if there was a reason the VA expenditures number was down so much and if the committee could see what the total compensation over time would be.

08:44:20 Ms. Scurr continued her review of the Summary Table of Six Selected States handout.

08:47:05 Ms. Scurr continued her review on the draft final report "HJ 23 - Structure & Funding in Other States" handout.

Discussion and questions from the committee

08:48:35 Dan Griffin, Director of the Office of the Valley Veteran Service Center, Ravalli County responded to Rep. Mandeville's question.

08:50:54 Ms. Scurr continued her review of the Summary Table of Six Selected States handout.

Discussion and questions from the committee

09:00:13 Rep. McKamey asked if the funds came from allocation from the state legislature and nothing federal.

09:00:37 Ms. Scurr continued her review of the Summary Table of Six Selected States handout

Questions from the committee

09:08:43 Sen. Brown asked Ms. Scurr if they check what the VSO's operation was.

09:09:02 Sen. Ellis asked if Ms. Scurr could get the rankings of all the states regarding the per capita benefits compensation received to the committee.

09:11:40 Ms. Scurr continued her review of the Summary Table of Six Selected States handout.

Questions from the committee

- 09:22:38 Sen. Brown asked Ms. Scurr about the difference in compensation between 2017 and 2019 in Montana and Minnesota.
- 09:26:07 Sen. Ellis asked Ms. Scurr if she could provide how much the state contributes per veteran.
- 09:27:26 Ms. Scurr continued her review of the Summary Table of Six Selected States handout and the MDVA Grant Manual.

Discussion from the committee

- 09:37:05 Sen. Ellis stated it would be helpful to receive information for Montana as was given previously for Minnesota, Alaska etc.

Public comment

- 09:38:30 Casey McInerney Montana Veteran Affairs Division
- 09:40:09 Roger Hagan, Montana Department of the American Legion

HJ 23 - Study of Montana Veteran Services Structure and Funding (continued)

- 09:43:19 Ms. Scurr began her review of the "PD05 – funding for administrative support staff for state VSOs" handout as mentioned earlier. [\(Exhibit26\)](#)

Questions from the committee

- 09:45:46 Sen. Brown asked what the money held for veteran license plates was and stated the importance of focusing on veterans supporting each other and using the funds in appropriate ways.
- 09:48:13 Sen. Ellis asked if the budget for 1.8 million in state special funds was the funding from the license plates that goes into veterans' affairs. Sen. Ellis asked Ms. Scurr how many VSOs have administrative support now and what she was expecting could get hired from the funds allotted.
- 09:54:12 Sen. Brown asked for clarification from Ms. Scurr regarding increasing the fraction of percentage of license plate income and possibly specifying those funds to different things out of that special revenue account.
- 09:56:27 Rep. Mandeville asked Ms. McInerney if she would envision seeing the \$300,000 spent to beef up administrative staff in the office in Helena or would it be spread across the state for local personnel. Rep. Mandeville suggested it should be overtly stated in the bill that the funds are to be spread around to hire local administrative support staff.
- 09:58:32 Rep. Shaw stated the \$300,000 would enable VSO officers to be able to go out into the field to help veterans.
- 10:06:21 Sen. Brown asked Mr. Hagan about the bill passing in 2004 and 2014 and whether that was interim or session work.
- 10:07:24 Sen. Ellis asked for a ballpark range for what the \$300,000 would be able to get in terms of support staff.

Committee business

- 10:09:11 Ms. Aldrich informed the committee the Secretary of State's office responded by transmitting the repeal of the rules which was filed by the deadline proposed by the committee.

BREAK (reconvened at 10:21 am)

10:10:50

Committee work session

- 10:22:25 Sen. Brown requested the committee hold off on moving PD 05 forward until the committee get further information.
- 10:24:02 Sen. Ellis asked for clarification from Sen. Brown regarding wanting more information about the money specifically raised for veterans and how it gets used in the veteran's program.
- 10:26:17 Sen. Brown stated getting more information regarding the \$1.8 million and where those funds were going and then moving forward.

Montana Military Interstate Children's Commission - Informational Briefing

- 10:27:39 Elsie Arntzen, Superintendent of Public Instruction began her review of the Montana Military Interstate Children's Commission's work during COVID – 19 and briefed the "MIC3 Meeting Notes: June 11, 2020" handout and letter from The Office of Public Instruction to the committee. **(Exhibit 27) (Exhibit 28)**

Questions from the committee

- 10:30:50 Sen. Brown asked if the language of the statute on membership could be changed to include representation from the senate chamber.

Public comment

- 10:33:22 Roger Hagan, Montana Department of the American Legion

Committee work session

- 10:35:14 Ms. Scurr reviewed possible upcoming meeting dates for the committee.
- 10:41:32 Chair McKamey stated by consensus of the committee, the next meeting date would be September 1st at 8am.
- 10:41:47 Ms. Scurr reviewed the response by Todd Everts, Legal Director, LSD, regarding emergency declarations.

ADJOURNMENT

- 10:42:52 Chair McKamey adjourned the State Administration and Veterans' Affairs meeting at 10:42 am.